United Nations A/55/278

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 August 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Item 116 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Report of the Secretary-General**

1. By resolution 53/138 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fifth session on measures taken to implement that resolution, on obstacles to its implementation and on measures taken or planned to ensure financing and adequate staff and information resources for the effective operation of the human rights treaty bodies. By the same resolution, the Assembly decided to continue to give priority consideration at its fifty-fifth session to the conclusions and recommendations of the meetings of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, in the light of the deliberations of the Commission on Human Rights, under the item entitled "Human rights questions".

2. The present report was prepared pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution, and contains updated information to that contained in the report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-sixth session (E/CN.4/2000/106), which was prepared pursuant to Commission resolution 1998/27 of 17 April 1998,[1] and should be read together with that report. The present report does not contain information on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which is the subject of the separate report requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/137 of 17 December 1999. That report is before the General Assembly in document A/55/308.

Commission on Human Rights

3. At its fifty-sixth session, the Commission on Human Rights examined the question of the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights, and, on 26 April 2000, adopted resolution 2000/75 on this question.[2] It will consider the question again at its fifty-eighth session.

Meetings of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies

4. Persons chairing human rights treaty bodies held their eleventh and twelfth meetings at Geneva, from 1 to 5 June 1999 and 5 to 8 June 2000, respectively. The

* A/55/150.

** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, this report is being submitted on 9 August 2000 so as to include as much updated information as possible.

00-60638 (E) 260900

reports on those meetings are contained in the annex to document A/54/805 and in document A/55/206.

5. Many of the subjects raised by the General Assembly in resolution 53/138 were dealt with at those meetings, including: developments in respect of the plans of action for strengthening support to the treaty bodies; the large backlog of reports awaiting examination before several treaty bodies; the large numbers of overdue reports by States parties; the imbalance in the payment of honorariums to treaty body experts; cooperation with United Nations departments, funds and programmes and specialized agencies; and cooperation with the special rapporteurs and special representatives, experts and working groups of the special procedures framework of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme. Information on these matters are contained in the background documents prepared on the follow-up to each meeting (e.g., see HRI/MC/1999/3 and HRI/MC/2000/3).

6. In paragraph 13 of resolution 53/138, the General Assembly welcomed the initiative undertaken by the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies of inviting representatives of Member States to participate in a dialogue within the framework of their periodic meetings, and encouraged them to continue this practice in the future. At their eleventh and twelfth meetings, a fruitful half-day discussion was held with representatives of States. During the joint discussion at the twelfth meeting, it was decided that the subsequent joint meeting should be of a full day's duration.

Materials on the work of the treaty bodies

7. In accordance with paragraph 18 of resolution 53/138, a compilation in a single volume has been prepared of all the general guidelines regarding the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties that have been issued by the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee against Torture (HRI/GEN/2). Other documents recently issued include an updated compilation of the general comments issued on general recommendations adopted by the treaty bodies (HRI/GEN/1/Rev.4) and a document summarizing the recent reporting history of all States parties to the human rights treaties (HRI/GEN/4). These compilations were issued for the twelfth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies and, soon after that meeting, were transmitted to all Member States.

Report of the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring system

8. In paragraph 4 of resolution 53/138, the Secretary-General was invited to continue to solicit the views of Governments, United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and interested persons on the final report of the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring system and to submit a further report thereon, including his own views on the legal, administrative and other implications of the recommendations made in the report. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1998/27, the Commission on Human Rights also requested the Secretary-General to undertake such a consultation and to report thereon to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session in March 2000. The Secretary-General undertook this consultation in October 1999 and submitted his report to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2000/98 and Add.1). That report will be made available to the General Assembly.

Analytical study comparing the provisions of the six principal international human rights treaties

9. The General Assembly, in paragraph 14 of its resolution 53/138, called upon the Secretary-General to complete as soon as possible the detailed analytical study comparing the provisions of the six principal international human rights treaties.[3] That study is currently being prepared by independent researchers, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as one component of a more comprehensive review of the treaty monitoring system.

Payment of honorariums

10. The question of the payment of honorariums to the members of the human rights treaty bodies was discussed in a report submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session in the context of a review of the overall system of honorariums to United Nations bodies (see A/53/643). In paragraph 29 of resolution 53/138, the Assembly took note of the discussion of the payment of honorariums to the members of the human rights treaty bodies included in the report of the Secretary-General on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights (A/53/469), and of other work being done by the Secretary-General on this subject.

11. The basic principle governing the payment of honorariums, enunciated by the General Assembly in its resolution 2489 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968 and reaffirmed in its resolutions 3536 (XXX) of 17 December 1975 and 35/218 of 17 December 1980, is that neither a fee nor any other remuneration in addition to subsistence allowances at the standard rate would normally be paid to members of organs or subsidiary organs unless expressly decided upon by the Assembly.

12. At present, the members of three of the human rights treaty bodies receive honorariums and the members of the others do not. Payment of honorariums was approved by the General Assembly to members of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (resolutions 32/212 of 21 December 1977, 36/240 A of 18 December 1981 and resolution 44/201 A of 21 December 1989, respectively).

13. Subsequently, the General Assembly, by its resolution 47/111 of 16 December 1992, endorsed amendments to the treaties monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture, in accordance with which members of those Committees would henceforth receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as might be decided by the Assembly.

14. The proposed amendment to article 8 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted at the fourteenth meeting of States parties on 15 January 1992, called for members of the Committee established under the Convention to receive, with the approval of the General Assembly, emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly might decide. The amendment is to enter into force when it has been approved by the Assembly and accepted by a two-thirds majority of States parties which shall have so notified the Secretary-General. As at 25 July 2000, 27 States parties to the Convention had accepted the amendment, a number significantly short of the two-thirds majority required for the amendment to enter into force.

15. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment decided, on 9 September 1992, to amend article 18 of that Convention so as to enable members of the Committee against Torture to receive emoluments from the United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the General Assembly would decide. The amendment is to become operative when it has been accepted by two thirds of the States parties to the Convention which shall have so notified the Secretary-General, and on the understanding that the proposed amendments would become operative only when the General Assembly had taken appropriate action. As at 25 July 2000, only 23 States parties had accepted the amendment.

16. In addition, the Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1993/297 of 28 July 1993, endorsed the recommendation that members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights should be paid honorariums equivalent to those payable to the members of other relevant treaty bodies and, in its decision 1995/302 of 25 July 1995, it urged the General Assembly to give speedy attention to this matter.

Ensuring adequate financing, staff and information resources for the operations of the human rights treaty bodies

17. In paragraph 6 of resolution 53/138, the General Assembly reiterated its request that the Secretary-General provide adequate resources in respect of each human rights treaty body and called upon him to make the most efficient use of existing resources and to seek

the resources necessary to give the treaty bodies adequate administrative support and better access to technical expertise and relevant information, and to seek, in the subsequent biennium, the resources within the United Nations regular budget necessary to give the treaty bodies such support and access without diverting resources from the development programmes and activities of the United Nations. In paragraph 7 of the same resolution, the Assembly took note with appreciation of the revised plan of action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the plan of action to strengthen the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, recalled the importance of administering those plans in accordance with established United Nations procedures, welcomed the information provided by the Secretary-General on the implementation of those plans, and requested him to include in his report prepared pursuant to that resolution further information in that regard. Further, in paragraph 8, the Assembly noted with interest the work being done by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on a plan of action to enhance the resources available to all human rights treaty bodies.

18. The Secretary-General has sought additional resources in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. Two new posts have been approved within the servicing unit for the Geneva-based treaty bodies in the Office of the High Commissioner, one to deal with the complaints procedures and the other to engage in follow-up to the recommendations and views. The recruitment process for these posts has commenced.

19. It is envisaged that further increases in resources would be sought for the biennium 2002-2003, in line with the high levels of ratification of the human rights treaties and the additional workload created by the entry into force of new instruments which, in view of the number of signatures and ratifications, is imminent, in particular with regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the involvement of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

20. Additional resources for the treaty bodies are also sought through the annual appeal of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for extrabudgetary contributions for the United Nations human rights programme. The main components of the various plans of action for the treaty bodies were incorporated into the annual appeal. The level of contributions indicates a high level of interest in treaty body projects on the part of donors but, as at 31 July, is nevertheless insufficient to carry out fully stated objectives.

21. In implementing treaty body projects, priority has been placed on continuing the service of staff members that had been recruited through the plans of action for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the recruitment of personnel to assist in dealing with individual complaints submitted under the individual complaints mechanisms administered by the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture has commenced, among the principal objectives of which is to help reduce the large backlog of communications that is before the Human Rights Committee. The third major area of progress is in relation to information technology. Through the annual appeal, sufficient funds have been received, inter alia, to enable work to begin or continue on a communications database; on the development of an external partners database which would maintain information on non-governmental organizations, human rights institutions etc.; on improving the user-friendliness of the treaty bodies database, and on the further integration of treaty body information with that of the other human rights mechanisms. The development of an external partners database is in line with paragraph 27 of resolution 53/138, in which the General Assembly recognized the important role played by non-governmental organizations in all parts of the world in the effective implementation of all human rights instruments, and encouraged the exchange of information between the human rights treaty bodies and such organizations.

22. Finally, the annual appeal is enabling the treaty bodies to take concrete steps towards achieving cooperation and harmonization in some aspects of their work. Towards this end, it is foreseen that working-level meetings among representatives of all treaty bodies will take place when all treaty bodies have had an opportunity to consider a possible agenda and expected outcome. Persons chairing the treaty bodies, at their twelfth meeting, suggested that the first such

meeting be dedicated to the topic of periodicity of reporting.

Number of reports awaiting examination and number of overdue reports

23. In paragraphs 19 and 20 of resolution 53/138, the General Assembly reiterated its concern about the increasing backlog of reports on the implementation by States parties of certain United Nations instruments on human rights and about delays in consideration of reports by the treaty bodies and about the large number of overdue reports under the United Nations instruments on human rights.

24. The growing large backlog of reports awaiting examination by treaty bodies continues to pose a serious problem. The problem is particularly acute for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was already among the treaty bodies facing a great backlog when the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child were adopted, which added to the reporting responsibilities to States parties. In an effort to address this grave problem, the Committee took a major step at its twenty-second session, held in September/October 1999, in deciding that it would henceforth consider nine reports of States parties at each session, in contrast to the average five or six reports examined at each session until that time. The Committee has undertaken to follow this procedure as from its first session in 2000.

25. To help it deal with its large backlog of reports, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has been authorized by the General Assembly in section IV of resolution 54/251 of 23 December 1999 to hold two extraordinary sessions for the purpose of examining reports of States parties. One session is to be held in 2000 and the second in 2001, each is of three-weeks' duration and is to be held in conjunction with a pre-sessional working group of one week's duration. Seven reports are scheduled to be examined at the first of these sessions, which is to be convened in August 2000.

26. In addition, the regular meeting time allotted to the Committee against Torture has been expanded by one week each year to enable the Committee better to cope with the increase in its workload arising from the growing numbers of individual communications and activities under article 20 of the Convention against Torture.

27. By its resolution 51/68 of 12 December 1996, the General Assembly approved, for an interim period starting in 1997, a request made by the Committee and supported by the States parties to the Convention for additional meeting time so as to allow the Committee to hold two sessions annually, each of three weeks' duration, preceded by a pre-sessional working group. That approval was granted pending the ratification of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by two thirds of the States parties to the Convention which would authorize the convening of two regular sessions each year. As at 25 July 2000, only 23 States parties had ratified the amendment. While the additional meeting time has helped the Committee considerably in reducing the backlog of reports awaiting examination and in carrying out its other functions, it is possible that, in the long term, much of this time may be needed to deal with workload created by the entry into force of the complaints mechanisms provided for in the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

28. At the same time, the total number of overdue reports of States parties continues to rise. In March 2000, there were over 1,200 reports due under the various treaties that had not been submitted (see HRI/MC/2000/2). The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights address the problem of non-reporting by reviewing the situation of the State party in the absence of a report.[4] The growing seriousness of this problem is leading other treaty bodies to consider the possible proactive measures that they could take to encourage timely reporting by States parties. An active discussion of this issue is taking place, in particular, within the Human Rights Committee.[5] At its twenty-third session in June 2000, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women decided, partly in response to the need to encourage non-reporting States parties to begin or resume their dialogue with the Committee, to accept multiple reports in a single submission, on an exceptional basis and as a temporary measure. This is the established practice of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with respect to all overdue reports. The Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Rights of the Child also accept

single submissions but for a limited number of reports, normally two.

29. It may be noted that this issue is closely related to that of periodicity of reporting which, as mentioned above, has been suggested as a topic for an inter-committee meeting.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 3* (E/1998/23), chap. II, sect. A.

[2] Ibid., *2000, Supplement No. 3* (E/2000/23), chap. II, sect. A.

[3] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

[4] In the case of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, this is done on the basis of the last report submitted by the State party.

[5] For the discussion by the Human Rights Committee, see its annual report to the General Assembly, A/55/40.

United Nations A/55/279

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Item 116 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General**

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–5	2
II.	Regional strategies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	6–11	2
III.	Regional frameworks	12–28	3
	A. Africa	12–16	3
	B. Asia and the Pacific	17–20	5
	C. Europe	21–24	6
	D. Latin America and the Caribbean	25–28	7

* A/55/150 and Corr.1 and 2.

** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, this report is being submitted on 8 August 2000 so as to include as much updated information as possible.

00-60226 (E) 250900

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/148 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-fifth session a report on the state of regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the results of action taken in pursuance of that resolution.

2. Mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights have been established within three regional organizations: the Organization of African Unity, on the basis of the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights; the Organization of American States, on the basis of the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights; and the Council of Europe, on the basis of the 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also established its own mechanisms to promote and protect human rights.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/148, invited States in areas where regional arrangements in the field of human rights did not yet exist to consider concluding agreements with a view to the establishment, within their respective regions, of suitable regional machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights and recognized that the annual intergovernmental workshop for the Asia-Pacific region (see paras. 17-20 below) was an important forum for the discussion of initiatives for regional cooperation. A similar observation was also made by the sixth Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia and Pacific Region, held at Tehran from 28 February to 2 March 1998 (see E/CN.4/1998/50).

4. Also in its resolution 53/148, the General Assembly welcomed growing exchanges between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and regional intergovernmental organizations, as well as the growing exchanges between the bodies created by the United Nations in accordance with the treaties dealing with human rights and relevant regional organizations and bodies; stressed the importance of the programme of technical cooperation in the field of human rights and renewed its appeal to all Governments to consider making use of the possibilities offered by the United Nations under that programme; and invited all Governments to continue to support the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner in the field of technical cooperation, with a view to further strengthening regional cooperation and regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights.

5. The present report focuses on regional strategies of the Office of the High Commissioner and the most significant developments since 1998, when the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly the last report on the subject (A/53/324).

II. Regional strategies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

6. It is widely recognized that progress in protecting and promoting the enjoyment of human rights depends primarily on efforts made at the national and local levels. To maximize the impact of such efforts, the Office of the High Commissioner has been developing regional and subregional strategies for strengthening institutional capacities, resolving the problems of greatest concern within a given geographical area and facilitating the exchange of best practices among the countries involved. Regional approaches should ensure more effective use of resources and thus enhance the responsiveness of the United Nations system to the needs of Member States. That approach does not imply the establishment of complex administrative structures in the field but rather more intensive cooperation and coordination with all partners: Governments, United Nations agencies and programmes, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations.

7. The Office of the High Commissioner is particularly interested in the promotion and protection of human rights at the regional level in close cooperation with organizations with mandates, knowledge and expertise concerning the region in question. Such cooperation involves consultations concerning programmes of action, exchange of information, coordination of efforts and joint projects. The Office of the High Commissioner also provides assistance, if required. Close cooperation has been developing at the regional level with United Nations partners, in particular with the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), including its six subregional resource facilities at Bangkok, Beirut, Bratislava, Harare, Islamabad and Port of Spain, and with the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which are developing their own regional methodologies. The Office of the High Commissioner, together with regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, is continuing to explore possible areas in which to involve the regional commissions in the promotion of human rights.

8. The Office of the High Commissioner has also been developing cooperation with other organizations at the regional level. For example, together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Office of the High Commissioner will hold in Mongolia in August 2000 a workshop on enhancing the role of parliaments to promote and protect human rights in north-east Asia. UNDP is also supporting the event, which is part of the implementation programme for the Framework for Regional Technical Cooperation for the Asia-Pacific region (see para. 17 below). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Office of the High Commissioner has joint projects with the Andean Commission of Jurists and the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights. The East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are, together with the Office of the High Commissioner, developing subregional strategies. Non-governmental organizations are playing an increasing role in the regional programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner, providing valuable contributions to the promotion of human rights, including human rights education and sharing of best practices.

9. In the next 15 months, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights intends to accord high priority to activities linked to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which is to be held in South Africa in September 2001. The Office of the High Commissioner and the regional commissions will organize regional preparatory meetings for the World Conference. In addition, seminars for experts will be organized in regions and subregions by the Office of the High Commissioner and the host Government. While contributing to the preparations for the World Conference, these and other events will become an important vehicle for regional cooperation in the area of human rights.

10. The High Commissioner has appointed four distinguished human rights personalities to serve as regional advisers. They are playing a significant role in the promotion of human rights and human rights advocacy through designing strategies and developing partnerships for human rights, facilitating coordination of technical cooperation in the field of human rights at the regional level and assisting in regional cooperation involving, for example, national institutions, parliamentary bodies, bar associations and non-governmental organizations. Over the next 15 months, their help will be drawn upon for stimulating government and public interest in the World Conference.

11. The establishment of the presence in southern Africa of the Office of the High Commissioner, operating in cooperation with UNDP, has led to many useful initiatives being taken in the subregion. The experience gained in southern Africa has provided guidance for the development of the regional approach of the Office of the High Commissioner. The World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, recommended that human rights officers be assigned if and when necessary to regional offices of the United Nations Organization with the purpose of disseminating information and offering training and other technical assistance in the field of human rights upon the request of concerned Member States (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), para. 7).

III. Regional frameworks

A. Africa

12. In Africa, the programme of the Office of the High Commissioner is aimed at strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law, as they are indispensable to putting an end to ongoing conflicts and achieving lasting peace, eradicating poverty and progressing towards sustainable development. This programme is to be implemented through subregional strategies tailored to the specific needs of countries connected through cooperation at various levels and facing similar, often cross-border problems.

13. The subregional approach is a vehicle to optimize the engagement of the Office of the High Commissioner in providing assistance to Governments and societies in Africa in their efforts to develop national plans of action and capacities, including national institutions in the field of human rights and to strengthen the rule of law. This approach is helpful in dealing with such issues as protection of the human rights of minorities, internally displaced persons and refugees. Subregional exchanges of experience can assist in efforts to resolve social problems, including the reconciliation of post-conflict societies. To that end, a human rights dimension should be introduced into the programmes for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Human rights should be integrated in programmes and activities of subregional organizations. The building of national human rights capacities should be supported through the development of subregional plans of action and through the provision of assistance by the international community. Human rights awareness should be raised through information and educational programmes.

14. To implement these objectives, the following activities will be developed at the regional and subregional levels:

(a) Strengthening the cooperation of the Office of the High Commissioner with the Organization of African Unity in order to review, on a regular basis, the needs of different subregions in the area of human rights;

(b) Continuing to assist the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, paying particular attention to the establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;

(c) Enhancing cooperation with subregional organizations, whereby;

(i) The Office of the High Commissioner will ensure that it is represented by human rights advisers to EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS and IGAD in their respective offices in Yaoundé, Abuja, Addis Ababa and Nairobi;

(ii) With regard to Arab countries in northern Africa, a joint regional project is being developed jointly by the Office of the High Commissioner and UNDP;

(iii) Attention will be paid to cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP);

(iv) The presence in southern Africa of the Office of the High Commissioner will increase;

(d) Providing support and assistance for the development of subregional and national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights;

(e) Providing support and assistance in the field of human rights education through the establishment of human rights information and documentation centres and the use of new information technologies;

(f) Lending support for the establishment of subregional and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

15. The Great Lakes region in Central Africa is an area characterized by: ongoing armed and ethnic conflicts, which have a strong cross-border impact; weakening of the rule of law and the subsequent development of impunity for crimes; ineffective administrations; and major development problems. This has had adverse effects on the enjoyment of civil and political, economic, social and cultural human rights. Civilians are the main victims of the violence and human rights abuses. Vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, are most affected and need to be paid special attention. The flow of refugees and the large number of internally displaced persons create instability and pose economic and social problems to the host countries. The contribution of the Office of the High Commissioner to the promotion and protection of human rights in the subregion has been significant. At present, the Office of the High Commissioner has field presences in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola. The subregional approach should allow for effective action towards the achievement of the following:

(a) Development of national plans of action in the field of human rights to deal with all aspects of human rights issues at the national level;

(b) Implementation of mechanisms and procedures to promote and protect human rights in the subregion, in particular, the human rights of women, children and the elderly in conflict situations;

(c) Establishment of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights;

(d) Provision of assistance in strengthening the rule of law and in reconciliation processes;

(e) Provision of assistance in human rights education.

16. At its fourth meeting, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa decided in favour of establishing, under the auspices of the High Commissioner, a subregional centre for human rights and democracy in central Africa, to be concerned, above all, with helping to train staff engaged in administering human rights matters, extending support to establishing or strengthening national human rights institutions, raising awareness about human rights norms, developing the rule of law and observing elections. In its resolution 54/55 A of 1 December 1999, the General Assembly, recalling the decision of the fourth meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, requested the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to lend their support to the establishment of the subregional centre. It was decided to appropriate US$ 1 million for the biennium 2000-2001 for the creation and functioning of such a centre. The concept of the subregional centre is in the implementation phase. A needs assessment mission was sent to Yaoundé to hold consultations with subregional partners on the establishment of the centre. A human rights adviser is being engaged to assist in the setting up of the centre and develop cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner, ECCAS and the relevant bodies of the Standing Advisory Committee. The Centre will be established in Yaoundé by the end of 2000. That will be crucial step in the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner to implement the subregional strategy for central Africa.

B. Asia and the Pacific

17. Pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner has been further developing regional cooperation for human rights in Asia and the Pacific. During the last two years, annual workshops on regional cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights in Asia and the Pacific were organized at New Delhi in 1999 and Beijing in 2000. Through those and previous workshops (in particular in the workshops held at Amman in 1997 and Tehran in 1998), a consensus has been reached on the principles of the Framework for Regional Technical Cooperation for the Asia-Pacific Region. The Framework has been designed to develop, inter alia: (a) national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening of national capacities; (b) human rights education; (c) national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights; and (d) strategies for the realization of the right to development and economic, social and cultural rights. The implementation programme of the Framework is based on a step-by-step "building-block" approach, involving inter alia consultations among Governments concerning the possible establishment of regional human rights arrangements.

18. At the workshops held at New Delhi in 1999, it was decided to convene inter-sessional workshops addressing issues under each of the four main areas covered by the Framework. The decision of the High Commissioner to allocate funds for the projects foreseen within the Framework was welcomed. During the one-year period between the holding of the workshops at New Delhi and Beijing, the following inter-sessional workshops and meetings were held: (a) Inter-sessional Regional Workshop on the Role of National Human Rights Commissions in the Promotion and Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, held at Manila in May 1999; (b) Inter-sessional Regional Workshop on National Human Rights Action Plans, held at Bangkok in July 1999; (c) Inter-sessional Subregional Workshop on National Institutions and Non-governmental Organizations, held at Kandy, Sri Lanka, in July 2000; (d) Fourth Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, held at Manila in September 1999; (e) Seminar on the Role of National Institutions in the Protection and Promotion of the Human Rights of Children, held at Manila in September 1999; (f) Inter-sessional Subregional Workshop on Human Rights Education in North-East Asia, held at Seoul in December 1999; (g) Inter-sessional Subregional Workshop on National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education, held in Tokyo in January 2000; and (h) Inter-sessional Workshop on the realization of the Right to Development and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, held at Sana'a, Yemen, in February 2000.

19. The Eighth Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia and Pacific Region, held at Beijing in March 2000, reviewed the implementation of the Framework for Regional Technical Cooperation for the Asia-Pacific Region. In its conclusions, the Workshop affirmed the importance of the technical cooperation programme in Asia and the Pacific, implemented with the support of the international community, including the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, as one of the key tools for the promotion of human rights. The conclusions emphasized the importance of undertaking activities under the Framework at the national and subregional levels with the assistance of the Governments concerned, national institutions and civil society.

20. In addition, it was noted in the conclusions that, within each of the areas of the Framework, it was appropriate to pay close attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups. Parliaments, national institutions, and civil society groups were invited to participate, as appropriate, in the development and implementation of the Framework. The Workshop endorsed a paper prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner on steps and activities to be considered in Asia and the Pacific to facilitate regional cooperation for the protection and promotion of human rights. The proposed activities, to be implemented over a two-year period, included the following: (a) finalization of the handbook on national human rights action plans and its distribution to key beneficiaries; (b) conduct of a survey of human rights education; (c) study on non-formal human rights education; (d) meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions on the role of national institutions in combating racism; (e) training on approaches to protection by national institutions; (f) workshop on the impact of globalization on human rights; and (g) regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In addition, several workshops and other activities were recommended at the subregional level.

C. Europe

21. In Europe and central Asia, the Office of the High Commissioner has continued its cooperation with regional organizations, including the Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union. One of the priorities has been the development of a regional strategy against trafficking in human beings. The Office of the High Commissioner works closely with the Council of Europe and OSCE in connection with the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings and the gender Task Force of the Stability Pact, inter alia, assisting in developing a common regional approach to preventing such trafficking. The Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union jointly sponsored a workshop for Governments and non-governmental organizations on trafficking in human beings; the workshop was held in Greece in June 2000. Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia are developing a joint strategy against such trafficking in order to strengthen inter-agency initiatives.

22. The Office of the High Commissioner regularly consults with different European human rights institutions. Together with OSCE, the Office of the High Commissioner operates a human rights office at Abkhazia, Georgia, that is part of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). The Office of the High Commissioner has also worked closely with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on a range of issues, including the establishment of national human rights institutions in central Asia and women's human rights in Yugoslavia, including Montenegro, and elsewhere in south-east Europe. The Office of the High Commissioner also participated in the annual tripartite consultations between the United Nations, OSCE and the Council of Europe, held at Geneva in February 2000 which included a target-oriented discussion focusing on training in human rights.

23. The High Commissioner visited the European Union secretariat at Brussels on 1 February 2000 to discuss cooperation, and several meetings of representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner and the European Union have subsequently taken place. The European Union is also working with the Office of the High Commissioner, the Council of Europe and OSCE on a quadripartite approach to

providing training in human rights for international field missions. A joint mission to assess training needs was sent to Kosovo, in Yugoslavia, in June 2000.

24. In connection with the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Office of the High Commissioner, in cooperation with the Polish Government, convened a meeting of experts on the theme "Protection of minorities and other vulnerable groups and strengthening of human rights capacity at the national level" for central and eastern European countries. The meeting, which was held at Warsaw in July 2000, focused on various aspects of the situation of minorities in the context of racial or ethnic discrimination and xenophobia. Experts participating in the meeting exchanged information on "best practices" and discussed action-oriented strategies. The High Commissioner has been invited to deliver a keynote address at the European Conference against Racism, which is being organized by the Council of Europe at Strasbourg from 11 to 13 October 2000 as part of the preparations for the World Conference.

D. Latin America and the Caribbean

25. Following consultations with Member States and national, subregional and regional institutions and experts in the field of human rights from Latin America and the Caribbean, the Office of the High Commissioner organized at Quito from 29 November to 1 December 1999 a regional workshop that adopted the Quito Framework for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. Participants in the workshop represented Governments, national human rights institutions, networks of non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and regional institutions. The Quito Framework has served as the basis for the regional strategy of the Office of the High Commissioner.

26. The long-term aim of the Quito Framework is to strengthen national capacities for the promotion of human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean by achieving the following objectives: (a) development of national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights; (b) human rights education; (c) establishment or strengthening national human rights institutions; (d) development of strategies for the realization of the right to development and economic, social and cultural rights; and (e) promotion of the human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups.

27. Under the Quito Framework and in cooperation with its partners, the Office of the High Commissioner undertakes various activities, including: organization of regional or subregional meetings for representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions to share "best practices" in the development and implementation of national plans of action; preparation of a compendium of existing national plans of action and specific programmes or activities for human rights education in Latin America and the Caribbean; organization of workshops on the role and functions of national human rights institutions; organization of a regional intergovernmental workshop on social, cultural and economic rights with the participation of national economic planning authorities, international development and financial institutions and development experts; and provision of technical cooperation in various aspects of human rights.

28. The Office of the High Commissioner has provided training in the area of reporting obligations for Spanish-speaking and English-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (for example, in Guyana in 1999 for English-speaking countries and in the Dominican Republic in 2000 for Spanish-speaking countries). At the subregional level, the Office of the High Commissioner has implemented several initiatives in Central America and in the Andean subregion focusing on the development of a judicial network, the training of officials in the area of administration of justice and the development of training methodologies. Those activities have been carried out in cooperation with the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and with the Andean Commission of Jurists, with which the Office of the High Commissioner signed a memorandum of understanding in 1998.